

Understanding Ebola

Information for the General Public

Kent County Health Department

November 2014



What is Ebola?



- Ebola is a rare, severe and often deadly disease.
- It is caused by an infection with a virus.

How is Ebola Spread?

- Ebola is spread when a person has direct contact (through an open cut, wound, or scrape or the eyes, nose or mouth) with:
 - Blood of a person sick with Ebola
 - Body fluids like sweat, urine (pee), stool (poop), saliva (spit), or vomit (throw up) of a person sick with Ebola
 - Objects (like needles) that have been used in caring for a person sick with Ebola
 - The body of someone who has died of Ebola
- A person infected with Ebola is **NOT** contagious until symptoms start. That can be from two to 21 days after coming into contact with the Ebola virus.

Who is at Risk?



- The risk of the general public catching Ebola is very low.
- Health care workers, family and friends who care for Ebola patients are at highest risk because they may touch blood or body fluids.
- People who touch the body of an Ebola victim are also at risk.
- Traveling to countries with active Ebola outbreaks can increase a person's risk of catching the disease.

How is Ebola NOT Spread?

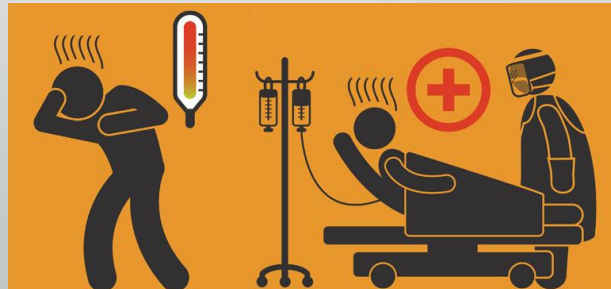
- Ebola is NOT spread through:
 - The air by coughs or sneezes
 - Water
 - Food



What are the Symptoms of Ebola?

Symptoms of Ebola are flu-like and typically include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Joint and muscle pain
- Weakness
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Stomach pain
- Unexplained bleeding or bruising



How is Ebola Treated?

- People with Ebola are isolated to prevent the spread of the disease.
- They will receive medical care such as fluids, oxygen, blood transfusions, and other medicines as needed.
- No medications are available to treat or cure Ebola.
- Experimental vaccines and treatments for Ebola are being developed. They have not yet been fully tested for safety or effectiveness.

Is it Safe to Travel to Affected Areas?

- The risk is small but the recommendation is to avoid travel to a country having an Ebola outbreak if possible.

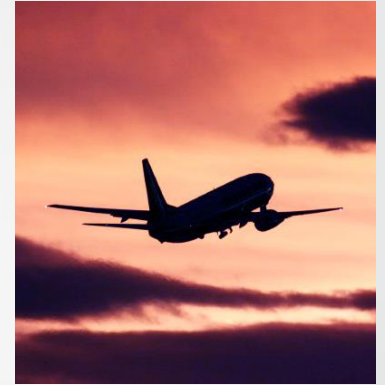


If you must travel to a country having an Ebola outbreak:



- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Do NOT touch the blood or body fluids of people who are sick.
- Do NOT handle items (clothes, bedding, needles, or medical equipment) that may have touched a sick person's blood or body fluids.
- Do NOT touch the body of someone who has died of Ebola.

After Travel to Affected Areas



- If you have traveled to an area with an Ebola outbreak or have been in close contact with a person who has Ebola, you will be monitored for symptoms after returning home.
- Local public health staff will contact you twice a day for 21 days to ask for your body temperature and how you feel after you return.

Could It Be Ebola?

- If a person is at risk for Ebola and begins having flu-like symptoms:
 - Keep the person in a separate room and away from others.
 - Contact 911 or the health department immediately to arrange for transport to a hospital.
 - Wear a mask, gloves, a gown, and goggles/face shield if available.
 - After any contact, wash hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.



Resources

- More information about the Ebola outbreak can be found at:
 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov/ebola
 - Michigan Department of Community Health www.Michigan.gov/ebola
 - Kent County Health Department www.accesskent.com/Health/ebola

This information is subject to change; the Kent County Health Department will provide updates as necessary.